

The high-profile envoy would also address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the role of Hezbollah and Syria in Lebanon, and Iran's rising influence in the region. The aim would not be necessarily to solve these problems, but to prevent them from getting worse and to show the Arab and Muslim world that we share their concerns about the problems in this region.

Madam Speaker, the President's plan has not worked. Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result is, as we all know, a definition of insanity. It is time to try something new. It is time for change. It is time for a new direction.

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. LEE TERRY

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 10, 2007

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favor of lifting people out of poverty by giving them the means to succeed. I rise today to speak against the Democrat's raise in the minimum wage.

No American wants to see their fellow person live in poverty. There are ways to continue to help Americans have all the means necessary to not only survive, but to thrive. However, the Democrat's bill to raise the minimum wage is nothing more than a Band-Aid on a broken little toe. While their intentions may be good, and I believe they are, their philosophical approach is economically and socially flawed. In reality, this plan will create an economic hardship for the employers who provide millions of Americans the opportunity to participate in our economy.

Some of my colleagues would have you believe that the right thing to do is mandate unto all businesses, small, family-owned, and corporate alike, that the business cannot determine the wage worth of an employee. They would have you believe it is the job of the government to do so. I believe in a market system without an intrusive, dictating government that will likely minimize potential employment opportunities for lower skilled workers.

I and many of my fellow free-market thinking colleagues believe that the correct action to take to help these individuals is two-fold.

First, on the macro-level, we must have a strong, growing economy from which highpaying jobs are available and competition for employees. Facts show that lowering taxes is an economic motivator. In the past 5 years, Congress has passed and/or extended the following tax cuts: marriage penalty relief, accelerated the increase in the child credit, accelerated the expansion of the 15 percent rate bracket for married couples, reduction in individual income tax rates, reduction of other regular tax rates, increased the alternative minimum tax exemption, reduce individual capital gains rates, and accelerated depreciation.

These tax cuts have helped grow our economy here in the U.S. to the point where we are now in a time of economic prosperity with Americans enjoying the benefits. Since August 2003, when the 2001 tax extensions were passed, the American economy has added over 7 million new jobs—this is more than all other major industrialized nations combined—

and posted job gains for 39 straight months. We have also attained an impressive 4.5 percent unemployment rate. This economy is most conducive to producing higher paying jobs.

Secondly, on the micro-level, these individuals who are making minimum wage most importantly need advancement in skills and education. I have had many conversations with a gentleman named Fernando "Butch" Lecuona III. Butch is the commissioner of Labor for the Nebraska Department of Labor and is the head of the Department of Labor in Nebraska. Butch also adheres to the philosophy and will be the first one to say that education is the key to lifting people from poverty.

In December of 2006, we in the House passed a tax credit for businesses who hired individuals in the Welfare to Work program, which provided a tax credit to employers when they hire individuals who have received public assistance for 18 months or who have exhausted their benefits. In addition to the Welfare to Work program I also supported the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, WOTC, when employers hire individuals from eight "target" groups—such as families receiving public assistance, high-risk youths, ex-felons, qualified veterans, and food stamp recipients under the age of 35. This is an example of the proper roll of government to help individuals succeed.

While doing my research for this vote, I attempted to find the number of people that are the bread-winners for their families working at or below minimum wage. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Nebraska has roughly 1 million people in our workforce pool. Nearly 60 percent of our workers work for an hourly wage. In the United States, 1.5 percent of hourly workers aged 25 and above make at or below minimum wage; 1.5 percent of our hourly workers in Nebraska equals about 8,000 people. Of the total 17,000 minimum wage workers in Nebraska, more than half of those are aged 16–24. These are not typically the breadwinners of the family.

The best tool to battle poverty is a free market with an educated workforce. We have the tools in this Nation to continue to provide Americans with the opportunities for which we are known. Increasing the minimum wage does nothing to help an individual better themselves, their family, or their community.

This is why I will not be supporting the minimum wage increase and I urge my colleagues to join me.

TRIBUTE TO GENERAL JAMES L. JONES

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this opportunity to recognize the long and distinguish career of GEN James L. Jones. General Jones just completed his assignment as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and Commander, U.S. European Command.

General Jones received a bachelor of science degree from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in 1966. He also attended the Basic School, the Amphibious Warfare School, and the National War College in Washington, DC.

General Jones was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps where he was ordered to the Republic of Vietnam in January 1967. After serving as a Platoon and Company Commander he was promoted to First Lieutenant. He returned to the United States in December 1968 where he served as a Company Commander at Camp Pendleton, CA. From May 1970 to July 1973, General Jones served at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, as a Company Commander. Remaining in Washington, General Jones served in the Officer Assignments Section at Headquarters Marine Corps where he was later appointed to Major and soon after served as the Marine Corps Liaison Officer to the United States Senate.

After being promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, General Jones was assigned to Camp Pendleton, CA, and in August 1987, returned to Headquarters Marine Corps where he served as Senior Aide to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. He was promoted to Colonel in April 1988, where later General Jones would become Military Secretary to the Commandant.

General Jones was assigned as the Commanding Officer, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit at Camp Lejeune, NC, where he participated in Operation Provide Comfort in Northern Iraq and Turkey. He was advanced to Brigadier General and was assigned to duties as Deputy Director, J-3, U.S. European Command, Stuttgart, Germany. During this tour of duty he was reassigned as Chief of Staff, Joint Task Force Provide Promise for operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

General Jones was advanced to the rank of Major General in July 1994, and was then assigned as Commanding General, 2d Marine Division, Marine Forces Atlantic, Camp Lejeune, NC. After serving as Director, Expeditionary Warfare Division (N85), Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and then as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans, Policies, and Operations, Headquarters Marine Corps, General Jones was advanced to Lieutenant General.

General Jones served as the Military Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, and on July 1, 1999 became the 32nd Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. He assumed his duties as the Commander of U.S. European Command on January 16, 2003, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe on January 17, 2003.

General Jones' has been awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Silver Star Medal, Legion of Merit with four gold stars, Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Madam Speaker, I know the Members of the House will join me in paying tribute to GEN James L. Jones for his commitment to the United States Marine Corps and the safety and security of America.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOE KNOLLENBERG

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 11, 2007

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Madam Speaker, on January 9 and 10, 2007, I was absent and